

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 722

NATION  
15 June 1985

## LETTERS.

### A.C.L.U. & THE FREEDOM OF DEBATE

*San Francisco*

Last year the A.C.L.U., the C.I.A. and Congress joined forces to pass the C.I.A. Information Act—an exemption to the Freedom of Information Act for the C.I.A.'s operational files. A.C.L.U. support of that act raised a furor among civil libertarians and journalists. This year the organization adopted a guide to future action that clearly refutes key sections of the legislation it had negotiated with the C.I.A., which I reported for *The Nation* [see "Welcome Reversal," April 27].

A.C.L.U. president Norman Dorsen diplomatically says no policy reversal occurred—only a restatement of shared principles. The rebels now say, "Who, us, differ on policy?" So the division is healed, which is good.

As the dust settled, the A.C.L.U. set up an informal mechanism intended to give its national board earlier warning of its staff's legislative positions than occurred during C.I.A. Information Act negotiations. I read that to mean no more secret talks like those with the C.I.A. on its F.O.I.A. exemption. Most important, the A.C.L.U. responds to critics with debates and internal changes, which speaks highly for its adherence to democratic principles. *Angus Mackenzie*